

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION SS-25

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CONFIDENTIAL TEL AVIV 8102

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (MONDALE WALTER F.) IS, US
SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO WESTERN WALL

REF: STATE 160089, STATE 153851, JERUSALEM 1732

1. AS WASHINGTON KNOWS, TEDDY KOLLEK HAS NOW UNLEASHED A STORM HERE OVER THE PROSPECTIVE VISIT BY THE VICE PRESIDENT TO THE WESTERN WALL AND OUR INSISTENCE THAT NO ISRAELI OFFICIAL ACCOMPANY HIM. THERE ARE TWO POINTS TO MAKE ABOUT KOLLEK'S OUTBURST. FIRST, HE SEES HIMSELF AS THE WALKING, TALKING PERSONIFICATION OF UNITED JERUSALEM UNDER ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY. AND, HE IS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF HIS MAYORAL REELECTION CAMPAIGN.

2. THUS, KOLLEK IS IN A NO-LOSE POSITION. IF THE VICE PRESIDENT CANCELS THE VISIT TO EAST JERUSALEM, KOLLEK CAN CLAIM CREDIT FOR SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDING THE UNITY OF THE CITY AGAINST SYMBOLIC ATTEMPTS TO AGAIN DIVIDE JERUSALEM. IF THE VP GOES ONLY WITH MIKE NEWLIN, KOLLEK CAN POUT IN MAJESTY. AND IF THE VISIT TO THE WALL GOES AHEAD UNDER ISRAELI AUSPICES, KOLLEK'S VICTORY WILL BE SWEET INDEED.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TEL AV 08102 280455Z

3. WE SHOULD ALSO NOTE THAT KOLLEK POSSESSES THE ABILITY TO EMBARRASS THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS THE U.S., AND HE DETESTS BEGIN. AS A HIGHLY POPULAR LABOR PARTY MAYOR AND MAJOR INTERNATIONAL FIGURE, HE CAN CALL INTO QUESTION BEGIN'S OWN COMMITMENT TO POST-67 JERUSALEM AND, IF THE VICE PRESIDENT GOES TO THE WESTERN WALL WITHOUT ISRAELIS, DRAMATIZE ALLEGED WEAKNESS OF PRIME MINISTER'

IN NOT "STANDING UP FOR ISRAELI RIGHTS IN ITS OWN CAPITAL" VIS-A-VIS THE AMERICANS, EVEN AFTER SADAT HAS HIMSELF TAKEN THE EAST JERUSALEM PLUNGE.

4. IN OUR CASE WE ARE IN A POSITION WHERE NONE OF OUR ALTERNATIVES IS ATTRACTIVE. IF THE VICE PRESIDENT GOES OFFICIALLY TO EAST JERUSALEM, IT WILL BE REGARDED AS A MAJOR CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY AND AN ACQUIESCENCE TO ISRAELI PRESSURE (SIC). IF HE STAYS AWAY, IT WILL OFFEND VIRTUALLY ALL ISRARELIS AT A TIME WHEN THEY ALREADY SEE THE U.S. AS INCREASINGLY BACKING THE ARAB LINE ON ISSUE AFTER ISSUE.

5. IT IS AN UNPLEASANT AND DIFFICULT CHOICE. BUT IN OUR JUDGEMENT, WE SHOULD STICK TO OUR GUNS. ISRAELIS DO NOT LIKE, BUT GRUDGINGLY ACCEPT CURRENT U.S. POLICY ON THIS MATTER. KOLLEK MAY STAY MAD AND GAIN A FEW VOTES, BUT WHETHER OR NOT TO OFFEND HIM IS NOT THE CRUCIAL ISSUE. WHAT IS AT STAKE HERE IS ALONG-TIME AND CAREFULLY CONSIDERE U.S. POLICY, ONE WHICH WE SHOULD NOT NOW ABANDON IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT.

6. I AM SEEING PRIME MINISTER BEGIN TOMORROW MORNING (WEDNESDAY) AT 1100 HOURS FOR A PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED TOUR D'HORIZON PRIOR TO THE ARRIVAL OF THE VICE PRESIDENT. BEN ELISSAR SIGNALED US THIS MORNING THE PROPOSED VISIT TO THE WALL WILL BE RAISED BY BEGIN. I WILL ONCE AGAIN RE-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEL AV 08102 280455Z

VIEW OUR POLICY, POINTING OUT THAT IT IS HARDLY IN THE INTEREST OF THE GOI AT THIS STAGE TO ALLOW A MAJOR CONFRONTATION OVER THIS ISSUE. BY SO DOING POLITICAL POINTS MAY WELL BE SCORED IN ISRAEL, BUT I WILL REMIND THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE NEGATIVE IMPACT ALL THIS WILL HAVE ON THE WHITE HOUSE AND THE CONGRESS. UNFORTUNATELY, TEDDY KOLLEK HAS THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT ON THE RUN, AND AT THIS STAGE I AM FRANKLY UNCERTAIN HOW BEGIN WILL HANDLE THE PROBLEM. I thus RECOMMEND WE HOLD OFF ANY FURTHER MOVES UNTIL I SEE BEGIN AND REPORT ON HIS REACTION.

LEWIS

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